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## Mission and Philosophy

### EDUCATIONAL MISSION

The mission of Emerson School is to provide a whole child, multiple method approach to instruction for gifted and for academically talented students. Emerson School encourages creativity, problem solving, and the development of basic skills, while providing a warm, supportive environment that promotes responsibility for oneself and others.

### PHILOSOPHY

Children learn best in a caring environment in which each child's unique gifts and talents are celebrated. People learn with different styles and at different rates. Teachers work to accommodate individual needs, and to foster positive, realistic self-concepts. They work to promote self-reliance and self-discipline in students. In our school, cognitive and creative risk-taking become safe and valued. Our atmosphere encourages mutual respect. Children learn by doing, by being listened to, by participating, and by working together.

In working with gifted and academically talented students, Emerson seeks to teach basic skills, encourage higher-level thinking, and to nurture creativity. We address the needs of the whole child, and recognize the need for children to develop intellectually, artistically, physically, socially, and emotionally. The school endeavors to instill important values, including respect, responsibility, compassion, and honesty. In doing so, we promote the importance of contributing to the Emerson School community and the larger communities in which we live.

### STATEMENT ON GIFTEDNESS

The terms "gifted" and/or "academically talented" describe children who possess one or more unusually heightened innate or demonstrated abilities: excellent academic aptitude and/or achievement; sophisticated abstract, creative, or divergent thinking; advanced use of language; an acute sense of perception, strong powers of observation, and/or a keen sense of humor; distinct emotional sensitivity and/or intensity; extraordinary memory; persistence and resilience; motivation and intellectual curiosity; and outstanding talent in the performing and visual arts. The distinctive qualities which these students exhibit in some areas may exist in combination with average aptitude or relative weakness in others. Perhaps not surprisingly, since these students' gifts place them so far ahead of the "norm" in significant ways, uneven (asynchronous) patterns of development tend to characterize this population, and gifted and/or academically talented children tend not to conform to any one stereotype or checklist of traits.

### ROLE OF GIFTED EDUCATION

To support our mission, Emerson provides intellectually rich and appropriately challenging curricula, enlightened guidance, and an atmosphere of ongoing support and encouragement. By offering educational programs that emphasize breadth and depth of learning, we build a foundation that can lead gifted and/or academically talented children into balanced development. We recognize that gifted students, like all children, may be affected by learning differences, attention issues, or emotional difficulties which can interfere with self-expression and performance. These children can be susceptible to heightened levels of anxiety because they are often highly aware both of their gifts and of discrepancies between their strengths and weaknesses. They may expect themselves or may be expected by others to achieve perfection. Emerson's role is to guide all of our students to make maximum use of their potential, to lead happy, engaged, meaningful lives, and to make significant contributions to society.



## DIVERSITY

Emerson School strives to make all students, faculty, administrators, and parents feel safe, respected and valued in their identity as full members of the school community. We are dedicated to an ever-increasingly diverse learning environment that will best prepare our students to intelligently engage in a complex, globally-interconnected society. At Emerson, diversity is thought of in terms of ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, learning styles, socio-economic status, and family structure.

## Equal Opportunity School

Emerson School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, religion, gender, body shape, disability, sexual orientation, or any other basis prohibited by federal, state, or local law in admissions and scholarship programs; the administration of its educational, athletic, artistic, or other school programs; or employment practices.

## **"What is an Independent School?"**

(EXCERPT TAKEN FROM THE ISACS DEFINITION)

Independent schools belonging to ISACS share certain fundamental characteristics of purpose, structure, and operation, such characteristics being the defining factors for ISACS of a school's independence. ISACS schools are independent in that they have...

- Independent incorporation as not-for-profit institutions with clearly stated educational goals and non-discriminatory policies in admissions and employment.
- An individually developed mission and philosophy which in turn becomes the basis for the school's program.
- A self-perpetuating board of trustees whose role is to plan for the future, to set overall policy, to finance the school (largely through setting tuition and generating charitable giving), and to appoint and evaluate the head of school.
- An administration free to implement the mission of the school by designing and articulating its curriculum, by hiring and developing a capable and qualified faculty, and by admitting those students whom the school determines it can best serve.
- A commitment to continuous institutional growth and quality manifested by participation in the rigorous and comprehensive evaluation and accreditation process of ISACS.

The freedom and accountability embodied within these concepts of the independent school are the source of independent schools' greatest strengths and their most important contribution as a model for education.